Paper Quotes Harriman on 'Red Reprisal'

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NEW YORK (AP) — James A. Wechsler, editorial page editor of the New York Post, has quoted W. Averell Harriman as viewing the current Communist offensive in Vietnam as a response to stepped-up ground activity by U.S. forces.

In his column yesterday, Wechsler said Harriman told him in a telephone interview that he made such a forecast during a debate over whether or not to intensify ground action following the cessation of bombing of North Vietnam.

Wechsler said Harriman, at the time chief U.S. negotiator at the Paris talks, voiced his prediction after Gen. Creighton W. Abrams asked for "all-out pressure on the enemy" several months after the bombing halt.

Wechsler said Harriman told him "it was important for the country to understand that the headlined new offensives of the Viet Cong were essentially a response to our actions rather than a deliberate reckless attempt to dictate the peace terms or torpedo the talks."

Harriman also was quoted as commenting: "I don't want to say anything that could be regarded as a hostile judgment of the way Mr. Nixon is handling things."

Reached last night at his Hobe Sound, Fla., winter home, Harriman said, "I can't comment on any editorial. I've made a lot of statements and a lot of people on television and radio and the press have taken them out of context."